

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 06452 01 OF 02 091342Z
ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3224
INFO THE WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 JIDDA 6452

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SA
SUBJECT: SOUTH ARABIA

REF: STATE 224270

1. SUMMARY: IN AN HOUR AND A HALF MEETING 5 SEPTEMBER WITH KING, CROWN PRINCE, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ABDULLAH, AND FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD, TO DELIVER PRESIDENT'S MEESSAGE, DISCUSSION OF SOVIET THREAT IN UEMEN OVERSHADOWED CAMP DAVID TOPIC, INDICATING DEEP SAUDI CONCERN AND HIGH PRIORITY GIVEN TO THIS ISSUE. CROWN PRINCE FAHD ASKED WHAT USG WOULD DO IN THE EVENT SAG HAD TO INTERVENE IN DISPUTE BETWEEN YAR AND PDRY FOMENTED BY LATTER WITH ITS SOVIET AND CUBAN ALLIES. END SUMMARY.
2. AT MEETING 5 SEPTEMBER AT KING'S RESIDENCE AT TAIF TO DELIVER PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ON CAMP DAVID (SEE SEPTTEL). REFERENCE IN THE MESSAGE TO KING'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT RE ASSISTANCE TO YAR SOON BECAME MAIN SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION, IN FACT CONSUMING ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE ONE AND A HLF HOUR MEETING.
3. I CALLED ATTENTION TO THAT PART OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER WHICH REFERRED TO A FORTHCOMING ANSWER TO THE KING'S LETTER ON YAR POINTING OUT THAT THIS MATTER WAS RECEIVING
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PAGE 02 JIDDA 06452 01 OF 02 091342Z

SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON. I NOTED THAT GENERAL CATHEY, OUR USMTM CHIEF, HAD BEEN BACK IN CONSULTATION WITH DOD OFFICIALS SO THEY MAY HAVE THE BENEFIT OF HIS FIRSHAND KNOWLEDGE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND PROGRESS, OR LACK OF PROGRESS, IN FURNISHING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO YAR. I ALSO TOLD THE GROUP THAT I KNEW THE PRESIDENT WAS GIVING THIS MATTER HIS PERSONAL ATTENTION ON A PRIORITY BASIS DESPITE THE

PRESSURES OF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT, LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE ASSIGNED TO IT BY SAG. I MENTIONED THAT IN MY REPORTS EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE THAT SAG ASSIGNED TO THE MATTER THAT I HAD QUITTED SAG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD AND DEFENSE MINISTER SULTAN, AS SAYING THAT THE YAR SITUATION HAD EQUAL, IF NOT GREATER, URGENCY THAN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONTROVERSY. BOTH THE KING AND THE CROWN PRINCE NODDED IMMEDIATE AGREEMENT WITH THIS STATEMENT.

4. THE KING BEGAN BY REFERRING "TO THE CIRCLE OF FIRE CLOSING IN ON US"

THANKS TO THE SCHEMES OF THE COMMUNISTS. "IT IS AMAZING THAT THEY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH IN SUCH A SHORT TIME. WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN ETHIOPIA, AFGHANISTAN AND WHAT IS NOW HAPPENING IN IRAN, SHOULD HAVE SOUNDED A SHRILL ALARM INTO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR GREAT AMERICAN FRIENDS JUST AS IT HAS TO US. THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN ARABIA, IF NOT REMEDIED, WOULD BE DISASTROUS TO ALL, TO YOU AS WELL AS US FOR WE HAVE A COMMON INTEREST IN FACING THIS COMMON THREAT. " HE SAID THAT IF THE SHAH WERE OVERTHROWN AND A LEFT WING RADICAL GROUP CAME TO POWER IN IRAN, THEN SAUDI ARABIA WOULD FIND ITSELF COMPLETELY SURROUNDED AND AT THE MERCY OF THE COMMUNIST RADICAL FORCES.

5. AT THIS POINT CROWN PRINCE FAHD ASKED IF HE MIGHT ELABORATE. HE SAID THE FOLLOWING:

-. THE SOVIETS, CUBANS, EAST EUROPEANS ARE STILL VERY ACTIVE IN PDRY.
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PAGE 03 JIDDA 06452 01 OF 02 091342Z

B. IT IS A QUESTION OF TIME, INDEED SHORT TIME, BEFORE THOSE COMMUNIST "HELPERS" WILL HAVE THE SOUTH YEMENIS AS WELL AS THEIR "VOLUNTEERS" ADEQUATELY ARMED, EQUIPPED AND TRAINED TO LAUNCH SERIOUS MILITARY ACTION.
C. THIS ACTION COULD BE EITHER AGAINST YAR OR DIRECTLY AGAINST US AT OUR COMMON BORDERS WITH PDRY.
D. WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND A CONCERTED ONSLAUGHT AGAINST US, IF ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME.
E. WE PROMISE YOU THAT WE OURSELVES ARE NOT INTERESTED IN STARTING ANY FIGHT AND WE HAVE NO SELFISH TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS, BUT IF PDRY AND THE COMMUNISTS START THEIR AGGRESSION, WHICH WE ALL KNOW IS AIMED AT THIS COUNTRY AND THE SOURCE OF OIL, WE WILL HAVE TO FIGHT BACK.
F. "IT IS VERY, VERY IMPORTANT FOR US TO KNOW, DIRECTLY AND CLEARLY," SAID CROWN PRINCE FAHD REVERTING TO A MEASURED TONE, "WHAT WILL YOU DO IN THIS CASE TO SAVE THE SITUATION? WILL YOU RUSH TO OUR RESCUE, AS YOU HAVE DONE TOWARDS CERTAIN FRIENDS ,
OR WILL YOU DALLY UNTIL DUST SETTLES ON CORPSES AND CHARRED REMAINS? IN SHORT, WHAT WILL THE ATTITUDE OF THE U.S. BE IF SAUDI ARABIA MOVES--AS WE SHALL--TO COUNTER THIS AGGRESSION IN WHATEVER FORM IT CO

MES?

G. CROWN PRINCE CLOSED HIS REMARKS BY SAYING: "WE ARE BEING VERY FRANK AND POINTED BECAUSE WE WISH YOU TO BE FOREWARNED AND NOT BE SURPRISED BY EVENTS," SAID FAHD, ADDING, "WE ARE NOT BEING ALARMISTS NECESSARILY BUT WE MUST BARE OUR MINDS AND OUR HEARTS TO OUR GENUINE FRIENDS WHO, TOGETHER WITH US, HAVE A LOT OF VITAL INTERESTS AT STAKE."

6. I REPLIED THAT THIS WAS THE IDENTICAL QUESTION THE CROWN PRINCE HAD POSED TO ME ON FEBRUARY 14 AND THAT I HAD TAKEN THIS QUESTION BACK TO THE PRESIDENT AND HAD DISCUSSED IT IN A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY VANCE, AND NATIONAL SECURITY DIRECTOR DR. BRZEZINSKI.

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PAGE 04 JIDDA 06452 01 OF 02 091342Z

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 06452 02 OF 02 091331Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 JIDDA 6452

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

I REMINDED HIM THAT I HAD BROUGHT A REPLY FROM THE PRESIDENT WHEN I RETURNED IN APRIL. WHILE I COULD NOT RECALL THE EXACT WORDS OF THE LETTER, I RECALLED TWO IMPRESSIONS THAT I HAD: FIRST THAT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS CHIEF ADVISORS WERE MOST SYMPATHETIC WITH THE PROBLEM WHICH THE CROWN PRINCE POSED AND THAT USG LOOKED UPON SAUDI ARABIA AS A CLOSE FRIEND AND VALUABLE ALLY; THAT I FELT SURE THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE MOST SYMPATHETIC TO ANY REQUEST OR NEED BY SAG NECESSARY OR VITAL TO HER INTEGRITY OR CONTINUED

INDEPENDENCE. SECONDLY, THAT THE LETTER ITSELF WAS, I FELT, AN EXTREMELY STRONG EVIDENCE OF THE DEPTH AND EXTENT OF THE USG'S COMMITMENT TO SAG; THAT UNDER OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT THE PRESIDENT COULD NOT DECLARE WAR OR COMMIT THE FORCES OF USG WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL OF CONGRESS IN THE ABSENCE OF A MUTUAL DEFENSE PACT, WHICH WE DID NOT HAVE WITH SAUDI ARABIA. HOWEVER, I FELT THAT THE COMMITMENT AS SET FORTH IN THE LETTER WAS AS STRONG A COMMITMENT AS THE PRESIDENT AND THE ADMINISTRATION COULD MAKE WITHOUT SOME FORMAL ACTION BY THE CONGRESS. (FYI, LETTER FROM PRESIDENT TO KING IS DATE 14 APRIL 1978)

7. THE CROWN PRINCE THEN SAID THAT IT WAS DESIRABLE TO FAMILIARIZE THE CONGRESS TO THE EXTENT OF THE THREAT PRESENTLY POSED BY RUSSIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA.

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PAGE 02 JIDDA 06452 02 OF 02 091331Z

8. I REPLIED THAT I AGREED COMPLETELY AND HAD FOUND THAT THE CONGRESS, ONCE GIVEN THE FACTS AS THEY HAD IN THE F-15SALE, REACTED IN A FAVORABLE MANNER. I ADDED THAT WE HAD HAD A VISIT BY TWO CONGRESSMEN TO YAR IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS AND THEY STATED AFTER THE VISIT THEIR GREAT AWARENESS OF AND CONCERN FOR THE THREAT POSED IN THE YEMENS TO SAG AND USG. I ADDED THAT I HOPED THAT WE WOULD HAVE ADDITIONAL CONGRESSMEN TO VISIT BOTH SAUDI ARABIA AND YAR IN THE COMING MONTHS AND I WAS SURE THAT THIS COULD BE ARRANGED.

9. I ALSO ADDED THAT WE WERE DOING A CONTINUOUS INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AND APPRAISAL OPERATION ON YAR AND HAD BEEN SHARING OUR FINDINGS ON A CONTINUING BASIS WITH SAG, INCLUDING THE CROWN PRINCE.

10. THE CROWN PRINCE STATED THAT MANY OF THE FEARS THAT HE EXPRESSED

IN OUR FEBRUARY MEETING AS ONLY POSSIBILITIES WERE FAST BECOMING REALITIES AND FOR THAT REASON HE HAD BROUGHT THE SUBJECT UP AGAIN.

1. I TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD REPORT TO MY GOVERNMENT THE FACT THAT THE FEARS AND CONCERNS WHICH GAVE RISE TO OUR FEBRUARY CONVERSATION WERE NOW UPON US IN THE FORM OF ACTIVITIES IN YAR AND I WAS SURE THAT PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE WOULD BE FRAMED WITH SAG'S DEEP CONCERNS THOROUGHLY UNDERSTOOD AND APPRECIATED.

12. I ENDED THE MEETING BY SAYING AS A PERSONAL OBSERVATION I FELT THAT THE POLICY OF THE U.S. HAS ALWAYS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE TO STAND BY OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES IN TIME OF NEED, AND WE HAD TODAY NO TRUER FRIEND AND ALLY IN THE WORLD THAN SAUDI ARABIA.

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PAGE 03 JIDDA 06452 02 OF 02 091331Z

THE KING AND THE CROWN PRINCE RESPONDED BY SAYING,
"AL HAMDU-LILLAH*"
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